



Teaching Committee

Standing Committee on Assessment

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Assessment held on Friday 13 June 2008 at 2.15 pm in Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

Present: Dr Chris Fewster (Chair), Mathematics, Professor Colin Runciman, Computer Science, Dr David Efird, Philosophy and BfGS, Dr Simon Eveson, Mathematics, Ms Karen Fritz, Health Sciences, Dr Amanda Rees, Sociology

In attendance: Ms Rosemary Royds: SAS, Mrs Rosemary Goerisch, Student Progress: SAS, Ms Sue Hardman, Academic Registrar, Mr Philip Simison, Graduate Schools Office

08/40 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr Anne Duhme-Klair, Ms Carylan Lobo and Ms Aseel Takshe.

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

08/41 Minutes

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2008 with the request that an amendment be made to 08/28 to clarify the meaning of 'the home department' in relation to students on combined programmes.

08/42 Matters arising from the minutes:

- i. Guidelines on the Conduct of Oral Examinations (M08/21.3)

The Committee **received** and **approved** an updated version in respect of when the audio recording will stop.

- ii. 08/21.5 Anonymous marking and feedback to students (M07/112a, 08/03g)

The Chair informed the Committee that this item was deferred to 2008/9.

- iii. QAA Institutional Audit (M07/105c, 08/21.6)

The Committee **received** the report of the QAA Institutional Audit that took place in December 2007. Members considered the report and **noted** the following as issues to be addressed in due course:

Paragraph 21: the induction of external examiners

Paragraph 27: perceived complexity of departmental Written Statements on Assessment.

Paragraph 29: Management of statistical information, particularly the process for considering the analysis of undergraduate degree classification and whether this should be broadened to encompass Foundation Degrees, taught postgraduate programmes and HYMS. This latter point should be referred to the joint Teaching and Learning Committee.

iv.
Academic Appeals and Complaints 2006/7 (M08/23)

The Committee **noted** that a meeting will be held with Health Sciences on 2 July 2008.

v.
Taught Postgraduate External Examiners Reports (M08/25)

The Committee **requested** responses from the departments of English and History to comments made by their external examiners regarding the impact of the small number of external examiners present at the Board of Examiners.

Both departments responded and stated that all external examiners had been informed of the date of the Board before the start of the autumn term. They also confirmed that there had been detailed communication with all external examiners prior to the meeting of the Board.

1. The Committee **recommended** that all external examiners should be given sufficient notice of the date of the Board of Examiners. The dates for annual meetings should, ideally, be set a year in advance.
2. The Committee **noted** that having external examiners present at the Board ensures that the University's policies and principles in regard to assessment are maintained.
3. The Committee further **noted** that each external examiner is required to attend the Board of Examiners and sign to support the Board's recommendations for awards for the programmes to which they are appointed to examine. It is not appropriate to ask external examiners to sign off marks from programmes for which they have not been appointed to externally examine.
4. The Committee decided that if external examiners are not able to attend the final meeting of the Board of Examiners then permission to hold the Board in their absence must be requested from the SCA. (**Action point:** RG for Guide 2008/9)

08/43 Oral report from the Chair

The Chair **reported** on a recent article in a student newspaper, *Nouse*, which reported that the department of Physics had announced to students that announcements would not be made during University examinations if an error was found in the question paper (in contravention of the spirit of paragraph 8.10.7 of the *Guide to Assessment*), but had been instructed to reverse this decision by the

Committee. The Chair reported that he had taken this decision by Chair's action in consultation with the members of the Committee from science departments. The department has agreed to adhere to University policy.

08/44 Online Plagiarism Module

The Chair **reported** that during this academic year the University has piloted an online plagiarism tutorial. The trial has been successful and University Teaching Committee has **decided** that from October 2008 it will be compulsory for all new students and a condition of progression/award. The Committee **received** and **approved** the proposed additions to the University's Regulations, required to facilitate the introduction of this progression hurdle. These proposals will be **recommended** to Senate. The Committee also **noted** that the Guide to Assessment and the Code of Practice on Research Degrees will need to be updated to incorporate details of this module.

The Committee **decided** that to ensure departments are prepared for the introduction of this module; they must be informed immediately that it will be introduced in October 2008. It was further **decided** to ask Teaching Committee to consider what support could be available to departments to ensure that the module is available to all students in October. Action point: RG/PS

08/45 Audio Recording of Research Students' Oral Examinations (M07/15, 07/90, 07/106)

The Committee **received** a full policy on the audio recording of research students' oral examinations taking into account the discussion at Senate. The Chair **reported** that he had consulted the University's Record Manager in respect of legal implications and a number of minor changes had been suggested. In particular it was suggested that recording the receiving and destruction of the recording be added to the policy. This was **agreed**.

Transcribing a recording in the event of an appeal was discussed. It was **agreed** that this may be necessary for the purpose of efficiency but only after the deputy Chair of the Board for Graduate Schools has determined if there were grounds for an appeal.

Members discussed whether it would be helpful to identify elements in the conduct of the oral examination that would constitute grounds for appeal. It was **agreed** that such elements should not be included in the policy. Action point: PS. To Senate: Cat II

08/46 Fees for 2008/9 External Examiners, Examinations and Re-Examinations

The Committee **received** and **approved** the proposed approximate 3% increase to the fees for examination and re-examination as listed.

The Committee also **received** and **approved** a proposal to change the fee structure for external examiners of taught postgraduate programmes. The current fee structure was formulated some time ago and had proved to be no longer fit for purpose, in the light of larger cohorts, and was out of line with comparator institutions. The proposal for the new structure was considered reasonable and generous compared with sector norms. Once approval has been received from Planning and Policy & Resources Committees the new structure will apply to all new appointments and also to those on current contracts where they will benefit financially from the change. Action point: RG

08/47 Assessment issues arising from modularisation review

The Committee **received** a paper from the Chair requesting consideration of a number of issues arising from the implementation of the new modular scheme.

A

Parameters for compensation and reassessment

UTC had asked the Committee to review parameters for compensation and reassessment in the light of its decision to permit a wider range of module sizes than had been previously envisaged.

The Committee **approved** the proposal that the 40 credit rule in respect of compensation in each stage of Bachelor and Integrated Masters programmes should be unchanged.

The Committee **considered** the proposal that students could resit more than 80 credits in cases where it would be impossible to select a subset of failed credits amounting to exactly 80 credits. Although the issue was debated at length no consensus was achieved. Members **noted** that reassessment on 80 credits was already a very substantial burden; that permitting reassessment beyond this level was not necessarily to the benefit of the student; that the rules on this issue should be as simple as possible. The Committee **decided** to make the following suggestions to Teaching Committee:

1. Students who fail 80 credits should be advised to either withdraw from the programme or transfer to a programme more suitable to their abilities.
2. The maximum number of credits to resit should be either:
 - i. 60 credits, recognising that this would be difficult if a programme contains only 40 credit modules, or
 - ii. 80 credits, which may be increased to 90 credits for programmes where 80 is inappropriate for the credit structure

B

Mixtures of levels within a stage

The Committee **approved** the proposals.

C

Study abroad or placements taken as additional credit

The Committee **approved** the proposals.

D

First class degrees with distinction

The Committee **considered** all three options and **approved** option C. During discussion, it was **noted** that it was unlikely that University-wide agreement would be reached on criteria for first class degrees with distinction; that this award has no comparability with any award made by comparator institutions; that distinguished achievement is represented on the student's transcript;

and that University prizes for academic distinction, awarded by Senate, would be a more appropriate means of recognition.

E University Mark Scales

The Committee **rejected** the proposal that University marks scales be refined to a level of tenths of an point.

08/48 A more robust system for confirming students' identities in closed University examinations

The Committee **received** and **approved** a proposal from the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress suggesting a more robust system of verifying the identity of students who attend University closed examinations without appropriate photographic identification. It was **noted** that the issue of procedure for checking identification during the examination would require further discussion at a later date.

08/49 Ownership of material submitted for assessment

The Committee **received** a proposal from the Chair and recommended to Senate the adoption of the change proposed to the regulations.

08/50 Review priorities set in October 2007 meeting

The Committee **considered** achievement of its priorities over the year and **noted** that items 3, 5 and 7 had been initiated and were ongoing and that item 4 was complete. Other priorities had not been addressed but would be reconsidered within the proposed priorities for 2008/09. The Committee **noted** that although not all the intended priorities had been addressed, the requirements of the review of modularisation had meant that a number of other issues had been dealt with throughout the year instead, including the promulgation of new policy on the treatment of marks following reassessment; on the treatment of mitigating circumstances; on the conduct and audio recording of oral examinations; on payments to external examiners; on parameters for compensation and reassessment; on dealing with mixtures of levels within a stage of a programme; on study abroad or placements taken as additional credit, and on the award of first class degrees with distinction. In addition, recommendations had been made on the regulatory changes required for implementation of the online plagiarism module.

The Committee extended its thanks to Karen Fritz, a founding member of the SCA, whose term of office came to an end with this meeting, and to the student representatives for 2007/08. The Chair of University Teaching Committee, who was present for this item, **noted** that the Chair was also ending his term of office and spoke of the University's gratitude for the work done by Dr Fewster in raising the profile and effectiveness of the Committee and the contribution of its work to the University's core business.

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

08/51 Preparation of the Guide to Assessment for 2008/9

The Committee **delegated** authority to the Chair and Secretary

08/52 Availability of Members

The Committee **noted** the Secretary will be contacting members to ascertain their availability during the summer vacation.

08/53 Date of the next meeting

The Committee **noted** that the date of the next meeting – and all the meetings for the 2008/09 academic year – would be circulated during the summer vacation, once finalised.

Rosemary Goerisch

Assistant Registrar: Student Progress

RAG/[June 2008]